

Title: Climate Change
Text: 2 Samuel 21.1-14
Theme: Facing the fallout of someone else's failures
Series: 2 Samuel
Prop Stmt: The fallout of someone else's failures causes us to long for a day when every wrong will be made right and banished from ever happening again.

This series in 1 and 2 Samuel has taken us almost 2 years and we are getting close to the end. Because so much of the account focuses upon David, it is easy to think of this as a study of the life of David. But it isn't. It is, but it isn't. Yes, we are given a deeply personal look at David, but 2 Samuel does not conclude with the death of David. The record of David's death does not come until 1 Kings 2. So, did the writer just miss that or forget to include that? No! We are to think of these books as theology, not biography. There is biography here, and in fact, a lot of it, but that biography is for the purpose of teaching us theology. So, what is the theology?

I titled this series, "Who should be King?" The first attempt at answering that question was covered in 1 Samuel in the reign of Saul. That didn't work out too well. The second attempt was David and initially we thought, wow, we like this kid. But the longer we've gone and the closer we've looked; we've seen plenty of warts on him as well. This final section (chapters 21-24) of 2 Samuel makes it clear. (chart)

God's response of wrath to Saul's sin (21.1-14)
 David's Mighty Men pt.1 (21.15-22)
 God alone is David's salvation (22.1-51)
 God alone is David's hope (23.1-7)
 David's Mighty Men pt.2 (23.8-38)
God's response of wrath to David's sin (24.1-25)

OT writers loved to use parallelism to help emphasize certain things. For example, chapter 21 tells us about a famine in Israel in which people are dying. This turns out to be a punishment from God. Chapter 24 tells us about a plague in which people are dying. This also is a punishment from God. The famine here in 21 is in response to Saul's failure. The plague in chapter 24 is in response to David's failure. So, who should be king? It obviously should not be someone with the character of Saul. And, it shouldn't actually be David either, but there are things in David's life that point to him. We get to the end of the book and the question is not yet answered, is it? 600 years later, we get to the end of Malachi and the rest of the OT and the question is not yet answered. All of this is designed to cause us to long for a perfect king to come. And he does. Do you see it? These past 2 years have been a set-up for our coming study in Luke. And the longing is real because the consequences of sin are so grievous and this text is a very weighty account that speaks to that.

Read Text: 21.1-14

1. **What on earth is going on?** (21.1a)

Famines are devastating. David's world was an agricultural world. The economy was, in a large part driven by flocks, food crops and grapes. Most people lived year to year and had enough to last them until the next harvest and any extra was sold for additional income. A one-year famine was hard and would really hurt the economy. Three years would almost be ruinous. Israel would be forced to shell out a lot of money in order to purchase food from other countries and people would be tempted to move to other countries in order to make a living. But this was a major dilemma for the Old Covenant people of God. The land was a major part of God's promise to them. The land not only belonged to their tribe and family; it was where the Tabernacle was. Life revolved around the Tabernacle. This is where the sacrifices were offered, where the annual holy days were celebrated, where people went for cleansing, offerings and to hear the Word of God. This is where sacrifices were offered for their sins. Life for the nation of Israel revolved around the land. But how can you live in the land when the land is not cooperating? How can you feed your family when there is no rain and you have no crops and you have run out of all of your savings? Israel's relationship to the land was directly related to the Covenant that God made with them. God promised them the land and in promising them the land, God promised to bless them with rain for their harvests and food for their herds (Deut. 28.12). It was theirs. In fact, they were to not farm the land every seventh year. It was the sabbath year and God promised to give them enough to sustain them. However, if Israel rebelled against God, they would forfeit the benefits of the covenant. Deut. 28.15 and ff. lays out consequences of covenant breaking disobedience and one of those consequences is that the Lord will strike you (Israel) with drought (v.22). So, David is right to seek the Lord (1b).

2. **What is your reaction to adversity?** (21.1b)

Hurricanes, tornadoes, earthquakes, flooding, blizzards, forest fires are terrifying in their own right. There may be some things that we can do to help prevent some of the consequences of flooding, or fires, but we are in the position of responding to those events. We do not have power over them. No matter who you are, how successful you are, how well known you are, how influential you are, you and I are powerless before our omnipotent God. Look at the second half of v.1. "*David sought the face of the LORD.*"

Here is a king, getting off of his throne and on his face, removing his crown and bending his knee. When difficulties arise and you are in charge, you are not only expected to fix it, but in many cases, you are looked at as if you are to blame. David could have been resentful to God for making him look bad, and for the suffering of his people and land. Instead of turning to God, many people turn away when adversity comes. David sought the face of the LORD. David longed to get an audience with the real King. He needed answers that he did not have. He needed help that he could not provide. So, he sought the face of the LORD. He knew there was a reason for this and he knew that God knew why. How do you respond to adversity? Do you clench your fist, grit your teeth and harden your heart? Do you shake your head and ask why me in a way that is more of an accusation than a question? Do you let the adversity drive you to God? Even adversity is a gift designed to wring self-reliance out of our souls and cause us to lean on the Lord.

Beloved, there is always a reason for adversity, and that reason is not always because of you. The Lord has purposes beyond us. He is not obligated to make our days on this earth easy. He has told us ahead of time, to expect adversity. Romans 8 tells us that the earth groans as if it is in the pains of childbirth. We live east of Eden. We don't live in the garden where there is no death, pain or sickness. Our days are like living in a mausoleum. No matter how much incense we burn, candles we light, deodorizers we plug in, the decay is never gone. David sought the Lord. And the Lord answered him. And the answer, was hard to hear.

3. **How do you deal with the fallout from someone else's failure?** (21.1c – 9)

When Saul was king, he went on a revenge tour and tried to wipe out the Gibeonites. The Gibeonites were occupants of the land when Israel arrived. They tricked Joshua into making a covenant with them by pretending to be a group of people who lived far away. In reality they lived just north and a bit east of Jerusalem. The city of Gibeah was the place where Joab killed Amasa (last week text). For possibly 400 years, the Gibeonites lived in Israel even though they were not Israelites. They were a remnant of the Amorites, but Joshua had made a covenant with them, as unwise as it was, and they were protected by that. Saul broke that covenant and tried to wipe them out. But now, Saul was dead. Saul was dead but there was fallout from his sin. The LORD told David (1c) *"There is bloodguilt on Saul and on his house because he put the Gibeonites to death."*

Saul claimed to be doing this for the LORD. He was zealous for the LORD, and he was dead wrong. Claiming a good motive is no excuse for doing something wrong. At this point it is obvious that the sin is not atoned for. Something needs to be done. God told David what the problem was, but there is no record of David asking God what to do about it and there is no record of God telling David what to do about it. Now, there are some things in this account that are unsettling and some things that I am not sure I know how to take, completely. But there are some things that are good to note, particularly when dealing with the fallout of someone else's failure.

A. **Take it seriously.** (3)

David meets with the Gibeonites. David takes this seriously because David takes God seriously and while we do not have all of the details of the original offense, we know that whatever happened was not a minor infraction. It is also clear that God cares about the Gibeonites. Israel was his chosen people to make himself known to the world and the people of Gibeah had a front row seat. They were sinned against and God does not give Israel a pass on that. It is tempting for us to let ourselves believe that if something tragic happens to people from another country, or, in this case from another religion that somehow, they don't matter. The Amorites worshiped idols. They were not the people of God, but they still mattered to God and this was now clear to them.

B. **Take it personally.** (3)

David asks, “*What shall I do for you? And how shall I make atonement, that you may bless the heritage of the LORD?*” The Gibeonites do not give a direct answer. They are guarded, careful, and appear to be uncertain as to how to take this. It is not a matter of money and they cannot take revenge on their own. So, David asked directly, again. “What do you say that I shall do for you?” By saying this, I wonder if David is obligating himself to a promise that he is not aware of the details yet. I say I wonder, because the text does not give us commentary. There is no insight from the Lord that the author includes. We just have the facts. The language that David uses at the end of v. 4 reads as if he is committing himself to doing whatever they ask. Isn’t that what Joshua did? Didn’t he make a promise to the Gibeonites before he knew all of the facts? I wonder if the same thing is happening here. But then it comes.

The Gibeonites ask for 7 of Saul’s sons to be handed over to them so they can publicly execute them and be avenged of what had been done to them. The Gibeonites actually said that this would be done “before the LORD.” Is this right? The LORD did not say this. David agreed to do this, but I wonder if that is because he had already obligated himself before he knew what would be asked. This honestly sounds to me like this is one of David’s darkest days. Simba famously sang that he couldn’t wait to be king, but being king sometimes presents you with two terrible choices. I’m not convinced that David did the right thing, but at the same time, there are only so many things that we can do, even if we are the king. But, what David did was...

C. **Keep your promises.** (7)

David had promised Mephibosheth (son of Jonathan) that he would be provided for and David honored that promise. I do think that this is a clear contrast to Saul, who’s breaking of a national promise had brought about national consequences. The descendants of Saul are identified and they were executed, publicly in the first days of the barley harvest, though there was not much to harvest.

4. **Sin affects us all.**

It’s a hard truth to grasp, but a necessary one to understand. We are influenced by the choices of others, particularly by those who are in authority over us. And what is so baffling and sad is to see how the sins of the leaders become the occasion for others to add to the madness. Children who have negligent, indulgent or abusive parents rarely look at their situation with insight and respond with wisdom. Instead, we tend to respond with bitterness, anger, depression and destructive thinking and behavior, which means we do the same thing to our kids or to others in our circle of influence. The madness just goes on.

Saul’s sin affected the Gibeonites, Israel, David and now his grandchildren. The writer then relates an aspect of this account that is almost beyond our ability to grasp. Two of the 7 who were hanged were the sons of Saul’s concubine, Rizpah. The bodies of these 7 men, hung for days and days. Rizpah camped out there, so that no vulture or beast would be able to add to the indignity of what had already happened. Her loyalty was eventually known to David, who then took the opportunity to remove the bones of Saul and Jonathan and have them buried, along

with the bodies of these 7 back at the site of Saul's father, Kish at Zela in Benjamin. Verse 10 tells us that the rains returned. This is confirmed in v.14. God responded to the plea for the land. This story is sad. Three weighty truths are pressed home to us. 1) Sin is serious. 2) Our attempts to fix it are inadequate. Yes rain came, but the coming of the rain cannot remove the grief for Rizpah and the other families. This is where the text leaves us. It is where a lot of the OT leaves us. It's like things are either unaddressed or they are unsettled. At the beginning of the chapter there was sin unaddressed, now we are unsettled. That is because sin, our sin causes problems that we cannot fix. But 3) sin can be atoned for. There is a way. David could not do it, but there would be one from his line, who could.

5. **Sin can be atoned for.** (14b)

God appeared to be caught in a dilemma. How could our sins be atoned for? What sacrifice could we offer that would appease and pay for the mess that we made? Officials in Hawaii can hardly calculate the damages of the fires. How do you pay for all of those lives, much less the buildings and property? That idea on an infinitely greater scale is what we are faced with. How do you pay for your sin? And for God, what sacrifice would satisfy? The only sacrifice that could pay for our sin had to be one that was infinitely holy, which meant that in order for God to save us, he could not save his Son who died for us. The Father did not step in and stop Jesus from dying for us. He did not save him from dying, but he did something greater. He brought him back to life. The payment was made in full and was accepted in full.